

What is a National Program of Action?

A National Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (NPA) is envisioned as an integrated management and policy framework. Land-based impacts and threats to the

marine and coastal environment are complex and demand long-term, cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, and broadly participatory responses. It is therefore not an end in itself but **a useful strategic tool** that can assist governments, industry and local communities in the progressive prioritization, over an extended period of time, of their sustainable development needs and goals, and in the mobilization of both political and financial support. It provides for a multifaceted, integral policy framework and a comprehensive, constantly updated, information base.

The National Program of Action serves as a framework for strengthening cross-sectoral linkages to enhance integrated watershed and coastal resource management.

A National Program of Action may also be referred to as a National Coastal Policy or National Marine Protection Programme, especially if the national program of action is integrated with other marine programmes, such as fisheries management or marine protected areas. The important issue is not the title, but rather the inclusion of concrete actions to address the harmful effects of land based activities on the marine environment.

What are the Goals of a National Program of Action?

There are five basic goals of an NPA. These are:

- To identify, resource and implement actions to **address specific causes** of environmental degradation or threats from land-based activities.
- To **provide a flexible mechanism** for identifying and addressing priority problems through partnerships and consensus amongst stakeholders.
- To **strengthen the public sector's** ability to effectively respond to these causes, and to ensure the sustainability of the actions and projects undertaken.
- To **mobilize resources and partners**, including the private sector, for implementation of specific projects.
- To **heighten awareness** and understanding of the value, benefits and vulnerability of strategic coastal and marine environments.

What are the Objectives of a National Program of Action?

- To implement actions to address specific causes of environmental degradation or threats from land-based activities.
- To design a flexible mechanism for identifying and addressing priority problems through partnerships and consensus amongst stakeholders.
- To strengthen the public sector's ability to effectively respond to these causes and to ensure the sustainability of the actions and projects undertaken.
- To mobilize resources and partners, including the private sector, for implementation of specific projects.
- To heighten awareness and understanding of the value, benefits and vulnerability of strategic coastal and marine environments.

What approach is used to identify Problems and Priorities?

The drafters of the GPA suggest a two-dimensional framework for identifying and addressing actions at the national level. The first dimension recommends broad and cyclical management actions. These actions are:

- Identifying and assessing problems within pollutant categories
- Establishing priorities
- Setting management objectives for priority problems
- Identifying, evaluating and selecting strategies and measures
- Developing criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and measures
- Ensuring necessary programmed support elements

Pollutant Categories that may be addressed by a NPA can include: Nutrients; Sediment Mobilization ; Physical Alteration and Destruction of Habitats; Sewage; Persistent Organic Pollutants; Radioactive Substances; Heavy Metals; Oils (Hydrocarbons) ;and Litter.

In the second phase specific strategies related to priority pollutant source categories, identified during the first phase, are developed and implemented. Throughout the process States should seek to ensure that the administrative and management structures necessary to support the national programs of action are in place. These include, as appropriate:

- Organizational arrangements to coordinate among sectors and sectoral institutions;
- Legal and enforcement mechanisms;
- Financial mechanisms;
- Means of identifying and pursuing research and monitoring requirements in support of the programme;
- Contingency planning;
- Human resources development and education;
- Public participation and awareness.

Summary

A National Program of Action is envisioned as a process of phased implementation that builds upon existing national development plans and priorities, and permits a

country to gradually address different issues and problems through defined actions. No single model can provide guidance regarding the elaboration of a national programme of action, nor its implementation. The concept of phased implementation reflects this, by providing a flexible framework that can be adapted to the specific circumstances of each country.

A National Program of Action is a phased approach that builds upon existing national development plans and priorities

A phased program of action provides for adequate planning and for the mobilization of resources and partners, even if priorities and viable solutions vary over time. It is a dynamic process, that builds upon existing assessments and data, mainstreams GPA components into relevant policy, institutional and budgetary frameworks, and incorporates lessons learnt as projects and activities are

developed and implemented. Effective implementation will depend, however, on its official endorsement by relevant authorities.